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SUBJECT: GUJARAT POGROM

#### SUMMARY

1. Extent of violence much greater than reported. At least 2000 killed. Widespread and systematic rape of Muslim women. 138,000 internal refugees. Targeted destruction of all Muslim businesses in Hindu and mixed Hindu/Muslim areas.
2. Violence planned, possibly months in advance, and politically motivated. Aim was to purge Muslims from Hindu areas. Led by VHP (Hindu extremist organisation), under the protection of the state Government. Reconciliation impossible while Modi remains Chief Minister.

#### DETAIL

3. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] visited Ahmedabad, Gujarat on 8-10 April to assess the impact of the ongoing violence. They met a wide range of human rights contacts, community leaders (from both communities), senior police, including the Director General (Chief Constable equivalent), politicians, journalists and business leaders. They did not meet state Government representatives.

Current Situation



4. Ahmedabad is now quiet. But sporadic violence continues in rural areas. The scale of violence since it began on 27 February was much greater than we have reported so far. Official figures (currently 840 deaths) underestimate the death toll significantly. They ignore missing persons (who cannot be included in death statistics for ten years). Reporting from rural areas has been patchy. A conservative estimate based on information from reliable human rights contacts puts the number of deaths at 2000. Some human rights contacts and community leaders, and reporting on other channels, suggest that the figure could be higher.

5. The killing was accompanied in many areas by widespread and systematic rape of Muslim women, sometimes by police. 138,000 people have been displaced and are living in 70 refugee camps. Over 100,000 are Muslim.

6. Muslim businesses were systematically targeted. The burnt out wrecks of individual Muslims shops are visible in rows of untouched Hindu stores. The Additional Commissioner of Police, Ahmedabad (Deputy Chief Constable equivalent) told us that every Muslim business in Hindu and mixed areas of Ahmedabad was destroyed.

#### The pattern of violence

7. Gujarat has seen severe outbreaks of communal violence, most recently in 1992. But most of our interlocutors, including police, said that the pattern of violence this time was different. The violence was led by the VHP with other Hindu extremist organisations. It was pre-planned, possibly months ago. Police contacts confirmed that rioters used computerised lists to target Muslim homes and businesses. The accuracy and detail of the lists, including businesses with minority Muslim share-holding, suggest that they were prepared in advance.

#### State Government complicity

8. We have already reported on the inaction of the state Government (first TUR). In addition, eyewitnesses report that five state ministers participated in the rioting on the first day. Reliable journalist and human rights contacts have also told us that BJP (Prime Minister Vajpayee's party) Chief Minister Narendra Modi met senior police officers on the evening of 27 February and ordered them not to intervene in the rioting. Police contacts deny this meeting happened.

9. But police contacts accept that implicit state Government



pressure inhibited their response. Chakravarti, the Director General of Police, also accepts that some police may have participated in the rioting, which eyewitnesses say was widespread. Half of the 130 people shot by police were Muslim. The police say they have arrested 8,000 people connected with the violence. They are unable to give the Hindu/Muslim split.

10. The Government has been slow in its response to the relief effort. The conditions in refugee camps are poor with little shelter and sanitation. The Government only began to provide food and shelter to the camps after the visit of Prime Minister Vajpayee last week. NGOs had been filling the gap. The state Government's initial compensation offer was discriminatory: 200,000 rupees to the (Hindu) victims of the attack on the train at Godhra; 100,000 rupees to all other (mainly Muslim) victims. They have now offered a uniform 50,000 rupees to all victims. But the state Government is unlikely to pay much compensation as it is bankrupt.

#### Role of Media

11. Much of the Gujarati language press has played a crucial role in fomenting the violence. It has spared no opportunity to publish poisonous rumours and propaganda which have fuelled anti-Muslim fervour.

#### COMMENT

12. The aim of the perpetrators of the violence, the VHP and other Hindu extremist groups, was to purge Muslims from Hindu and mixed localities in order to ghettoise them. Their systematic campaign of violence has all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing. The attack on the train at Godhra on 27 February provided the pretext. If it had not occurred, another one would have been found.

13. The VHP and its allies acted with the support of the state Government. They could not have inflicted so much damage without the climate of impunity created by the state Government. Chief Minister Narendra Modi is directly responsible. His actions have not just been guided by a cynical assessment of political advantage. As an architect of the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda, which it has pursued in Gujarat since it came to power in 1995, he is a believer in the VHP's ideological motivation.

14. The VHP may succeed. The rule of law has failed. There is



no confidence in the police or the judiciary. While Modi remains in power, Muslims and many others will remain frightened and insecure; those displaced by the violence will be reluctant to return to their homes; reconciliation will be impossible; and acts of retaliation cannot be ruled out. However, the latest news today is that Vajpayee may replace Modi after a BJP meeting on 12-14 March.

15. MIFT considers possible courses of action.

Contact: [REDACTED]

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